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Boy Killed In House Fire That Family Escaped

Hysterical Mother Yells, 'Get My Baby, Get My Baby'

POSTED: 11:54 am CST February 13, 2008
UPDATED: 12:46 pm CST February 13, 2008

EAST CHICAGO, Ind. -- A 13-year-old boy died in a house fire possibly started by a bathroom candle Monday night.

Trevone McCollum, 13, was found dead in an upstairs bedroom. The Lake County Coroner's Office ruled he died of smoke inhalation. He did not suffer any external trauma.

The East Chicago police and fire departments were alerted to the blaze at 9:39 p.m. and arrived quickly. East Chicago Fire Chief Val Gomez said the blaze was confined to the second floor of a brick home at 4432 Olcott Ave. Firefighters extinguished the blaze within 5 to 10 minutes.

Trevone's mother, Kimberly, was yelling hysterically for firefighters to "get my baby, get my baby, he's still upstairs."

The father, Tremaye McCollum, told police Trevone and daughter Tremya, 8, were asleep in their upstairs bedrooms, while he and his wife, Kimberly, were sleeping downstairs. They awoke to sounds of their son screaming that the house was on fire.

Tremaye McCollum ran upstairs and grabbed his daughter. Tremya burned his feet running through the fire. He went back for his son, but the fire was too intense to access the rear bedroom.

Tremaye McCollum ran outside to the rear west side of the house. He climbed up to the bedroom and started to break the bedroom window with a pot. He suffered cuts to his hands.

Kimberly McCollum fainted and injured her leg. Tremya and Kimberly McCollum were taken to St. Catherine Hospital for treatment. Tremya McCollum is being treated at the Children's Memorial Hospital burn unit in Chicago.

Detective Jeff Roseboom of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security's Division of Fire and Building Safety, said the fire will be ruled accidental, and investigators can't rule out the possibility of unattended candles as a cause.

Kimberly McCollum is employed at the East Chicago Post Office.

Family spokeswoman Shirley Noland, the postmaster, said she set up a donation memorial fund at Fifth Third Bank; donations will be accepted at all branches.

Noland said she is in the process of setting up a place for the family to stay through the Red Cross.

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Published: February 13, 2008 10:50 pm

Terre Haute airport may have fire issue solved

By Crystal Garcia

The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE — The problem of fire protection for the Terre Haute International Airport-Hulman Field may be solved at the Airport Authority Board's next meeting.

Eric Hettlinger of Terre Haute presented the board with a business plan for Eriowcin Fire Inc. to provide fire protection for the airport when the Indiana National Guard's protection ceases April 1.

This is the first year of business for Eriowcin Fire Inc., but Hettlinger retired from the Guard three years ago, and has been an airfield firefighter with the Military Department of Indiana for 20 years.

As part of the Guard's lease with the airport, about a dozen firefighters and several fire trucks were provided at the Guard's expense of about \$1 million annually.

Eriowcin's services are proposed to cost \$350,000 for one year of operation, Hettlinger said.

That cost would include: workmen's compensation insurance; health insurance; retirement; record keeping; supplies and uniforms; initial training and annual training; physicals; payroll and payroll taxes; and firefighting equipment and supplies such as tools, hydrant wrenches, extrication equipment and EMS supplies, according to the business plan.

According to the business plan, the only things the airport would need to provide are: an Airport Rescue Fire Fighting apparatus such as a truck, fuel for the apparatus, a building with heat and air conditioning, insurance on the apparatus and building, utilities for the building and communications such as phones and radios.

Airport Director Tom Long reported that the airport is in the process of acquiring two trucks from the airport in Fort Wayne with the possibility of one from the airport in Indianapolis. Though nothing has been put in writing yet, there have been talks of receiving some equipment from the Guard.

No discussion took place about the business plan at Wednesday's meeting, with the board members reviewing the plan to talk about it at the next meeting, which is March 12.

"If they want to keep this airport moving forward, they're going to have to [get fire protection]," said Cindi Hettlinger, president of Eriowcin.

Terre Haute Mayor Duke Bennett, who was not at the meeting, said the city has been working with the lieutenant governor's office, Homeland Security and other agencies to come up with a solution to the fire protection problem.

Local legislators also have been contacted to keep everyone updated on the situation, Bennett said.

"We're working every avenue we can to do something here," he said. "... but really, we don't have any specific information back yet."

Fire protection can be provided by the city, Bennett said, but nothing related to airplanes because city firefighters are only trained for buildings and EMS runs.

In other news, the Airport Authority Board voted not to have a Terre Haute Air Show this year even though some companies have approached the board trying to persuade them otherwise.

After some discussion about finances and time, the board unanimously voted to move forward in planning a 2009 show.

"If we don't commit, we're not going to move forward," said board member Darryl Huyett at the meeting.

Crystal Garcia can be reached at (812) 231-4271 or crystal.garcia@tribstar.com.

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RDA opens cash floodgate for river

BY KEITH BENMAN

kbenman@nwi.com

219.933.3326 | Thursday, February 14, 2008 | **No comments posted.**

The Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority has approved a \$6 million grant that could have 8,000 homeowners ripping up their flood insurance by 2010.

At its regular meeting in Indianapolis on Tuesday, the RDA approved the grant for the Little Calumet River Basin Commission, which is providing the local share of funds for the \$200 million project.

Work could begin by fall on the last two segments of the massive project, according to Dan Gardner, Little Calumet River Basin Commission executive director. Those involve the construction of levies and other flood control measures from Northcote Avenue in Hammond to the Illinois border at Munster's western edge.

The project to control funding along a 22-mile stretch of the river began in 1980 and has proceeded by fits and starts until recent years. It appeared the project might yet take another six years. The Indiana General Assembly generally has funded the local share of it in \$2 million installments every two years.

But in September, Gov. Mitch Daniels and U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Ind., sent a joint request to the RDA to provide the \$6 million local share needed to complete the project.

That \$6 million will allow tens of millions of dollars in federal funds to be spent on the project, which is being done under the supervision of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps plans to let the final contracts for the projects by this fall, Gardner said. That means work could wrap up by the end of 2009 and the federal government could proceed to take the area out of the flood zone.

Currently, people living in the flood zone and businesses there must purchase federally backed flood insurance. That insurance can cost more than \$1,000 per year for some homeowners.

"You have people in that flood plain and economic development opportunities around Cabela's and the former River Park Apartments," said RDA executive director Tim Sanders. "It will be good for the city when this is done and the sooner the better."

The Little Calumet River Basin Commission let the RDA know it could need up to \$7 million, but agreed to come back with a further request if more money is needed, Sanders said.

The money was granted to the commission with the understanding that state Sen. Frank Mrvan, D-Hammond, and others would push the Indiana General Assembly to continue with its two-year appropriations for the project so the RDA can be repaid, Sanders said.

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1:35 PM February 13, 2008

Lake Shafer ice jam causes more flooding

Associated Press

February 13, 2008

MONTICELLO, Ind. — An ice jam on Lake Shafer caused waters to rise, prompting emergency officials to evacuate three families from their homes and distribute sandbags throughout the community.

White County Emergency Management Agency director Gordon Cochran says NIPSCO increased and decreased the flow of water through the Norway Dam to try to break up the ice, but it did not appear to be loosening the jam. “We’re still having problems,” Cochran said. “The ice jam seems to be growing.”

He said they were monitoring several homes as waters continued to rise today in some areas around the lake about 20 miles north of Lafayette. At least two businesses along the lake reported flooding.

Cochran said the lake had risen about 8 inches from about 5 p.m. Tuesday night to 11 a.m. Wednesday morning. Emergency workers were providing sandbags for people whose homes or businesses were threatened by flooding.

NIPSCO spokesman Jim Fitzer said the dam was operating at normal levels this morning.

Heavy rains and snow melt caused flooding along the Tippecanoe River in Monticello and in other areas of northern Indiana last week and last month.

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9:20 AM February 14, 2008

National Guard joins lake ice battle

By ERIC WEDDLE

Journal & Courier

February 14, 2008

MONTICELLO -- The Indiana National Guard arrived here late Wednesday to help save homes from Lake Shafer's encroaching waters caused by an ice jam.

The pileup of frozen chunks across the lake forced water levels to rise unpredictably. Tuesday night the water dropped an inch. But when it swelled by 8 inches Wednesday, residents began to fear more flooding, said Gordon Cochran, White County's Emergency Management director.

"I've been here since 1988 and there's never been water in here," said Ron Motuelle of his lakefront home on Lowes Bridge Road that he feared could become flooded. "I hope the Guard can take a little stress off, but once the water starts, there is no stopping it."

That threat convinced Gov. Mitch Daniels to authorize around 40 members of the Army National Guard from the 1638th Transportation Company out of Gary to help build protective sand walls and take other safety measures that may affect 100 to 200 homes and area roads.

Around 11 p.m. Wednesday, Cochran said the water appeared to have dropped a foot and a half, possibly signaling a shift or complete break in the ice jam.

An ice jam is an unpredictable occurrence, said Scott Morlock, chief of the hydrologic networks section for the U.S. Geological Survey in Indianapolis.

Sometimes, when high water flows are followed by bitter cold, small rafts of ice can form, he said. These pieces can catch on rocks or narrow points and build up to create a dam.

The two and a half miles of ice jam on Lake Shafer had already caused boats to be jolted from docks and boat houses to be flooded.

Cochran was unsure whether any homes had been damaged by the ice jam.

With 18,000 sandbags on hand to be filled, Cochran was confident the Guard -- along with volunteers and emergency management staff and volunteers from Cass, Miami and Lake counties, as well as the Indiana Department of Homeland Security and the Monon Fire Department -- could take a shot at protecting homes against the unstable nature of the ice.

"We are better to be safe than sorry," he said.

Excess bags were to be left at the Twin Lakes Regional Sewer District building for homeowners to take as needed. The flooding area included homes along Stahl Road, West Shafer Drive, Bedford Bay Court and Apple Knob Drive. While the shards of ice created alien-like sounds when shifting slightly, Motuelle prepared to stay awake late into the night -- not to listen, but watch for water.

He and wife Marilyn were packing up items to evacuate if needed.

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February 14, 2008

Noblesville flooding trends will continue, surveyor says

Surveyor's data say storms could be higher in intensity and more frequent

By Chris Sikich

Chris.Sikich@TheNoblesvilleLedger.com

February 14, 2008

NOBLESVILLE -- Fourteen of the top 20 floods in Noblesville's recorded history have come since 2002, including last week's and the one on Jan. 11.

Kent Ward, Hamilton County surveyor since 1977, says that trend will continue. He thinks it's related to global warming, although his office also will check for local culprits.

"According to the journals, the storms are supposed to be higher in intensity and more frequent," Ward said. "That's something we may experience more of in the future."

That's disconcerting, said John South, district manager of the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, because flooding causes the most significant property damage year in and out nationwide of any natural disasters. "It's worse than tornadoes and hurricanes, but they get the big headlines," he said.

Flooding has been recorded in Noblesville -- the water is measured at the Logan Street bridge -- since 1947, except for one historically high flood in 1913.

R. David Bice, director of operations at Hamilton County Emergency Management, said the lay of the land makes this a flood-prone area. He said it starts at White River in Muncie, Ind., and has impacts all the way to Indianapolis, so it's possible to see high water here when it only rains up north.

"It's just Mother Nature," he said.

Noblesville Planning Director Steve Huntley said development over the years as far upstream as Delaware and Madison counties could have caused water to reach and flow down the White River more quickly, worsening flooding here.

He said communities now have standards in place to stop that. Since 1981, the city has been in the National Flood Insurance Program, meaning it has denied permits within the flood plain that don't add additional water capacity. That can be as simple as taking out the side of a riverbank. Detention and retention ponds have also been a staple of developments, he said, to manage water.

Locally, the surveyor's office has not found any illegal berms on the river. A 2003 investigation by the U.S. Geological Survey and Indiana Department of Natural Resources showed that a 20-foot-high earthen wall built by commercial mining company U.S. Aggregates on the river just south of Noblesville may have worsened floods.

Ward doesn't suspect development upstream or downstream has led to the recent spate of flooding. He said there hasn't been much in the way of development recently up to and including Madison County that would have affected the river. Likewise, he doesn't think development downstream is having an impact in Noblesville.

The Department of Natural Resources handles permitting of developments in the floodway. Dave Knipe said since 1973 developers have needed to prove they are not causing a rise in the 100-year flood level greater than 0.14 of a foot.

He said flooding this year could have been caused by the heavy rains pounding soil that's already supersaturated. "At this point, any rain is pretty much responding in the river," he said.

During last week's flood, Allisonville Road and Ind. 19 both flooded earlier than the city and county expected. Ward suspects infrastructure installed at both roads to alleviate flooding didn't work properly. He's also going to check

Stony Creek for a logjam. "I don't think there's any, but you never know," he said. "Water like that can move a lot of stuff in a hurry."

Noblesville flood history

Here are historical White River crests at the Logan Street bridge in Noblesville. Last week's flood, which the National Weather Service said crested at about 18.60 feet Feb. 7, has not yet been added. Measurements are in feet.

- 1 -- 23.80, March 25, 1913.
- 2 -- 21.86, July 10, 2003.
- 3 -- 21.31, April 22, 1964.
- 4 -- 21.29, Dec. 31, 1990.
- 5 -- 21.00, Jan. 13, 2005.
- 6 -- 20.65, May 14, 2002.
- 7 -- 20.55, June 15, 1958.
- 8 -- 20.42, Jan. 24, 1999.
- 9 -- 20.07, March 25, 2007.
- 10 -- 19.99, Sept. 4, 2003.
- 11 -- 19.94, June 30, 1957.
- 12 -- 19.59, Jan. 7, 2005.
- 13 -- 18.43, May 12, 2003.
- 14 -- 18.01, July 7, 2003.
- 15 -- 17.03, Jan. 6, 2004.
- 16 -- 16.98, Jan. 16, 2007.
- 17 -- 15.88, Dec. 3, 2006.
- 18 -- 14.45, June 12, 2004.
- 19 -- 14.05, Jan. 11, 2008.
- 20 -- 11.05, June 17, 2004.

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Guard Fills Sandbags to Protect Monticello Homes from Flooding

By the Associated Press

2/14/2008

Indiana National Guard members filled about 9,000 sandbags to use against rising floodwaters caused by an ice jam on Lake Shafer.

The pileup of frozen chunks across the lake forced lake levels to rise by 8 inches Wednesday, causing water to seep into homes, said Gordon Cochran, White County's Emergency Management director. Late in the day, the water appeared to have dropped more than a foot, which might signal a shift or break in the ice jam, Cochran said.

The flooding threat convinced Gov. Mitch Daniels to authorize the Army National Guard to help build protective sand walls and take other safety measures that may affect 100 to 200 homes and roads in the area about 20 miles north of Lafayette.

"I've been here since 1988 and there's never been water in here," said Ron Motuelle of his lakefront home he feared could become flooded. "I hope the Guard can take a little stress off, but once the water starts, there is no stopping it."

Soldiers from 1638th Transportation Company from Remington and Detachment 1 from Gary along with the 1538th Transportation Company from Elkhart assisted, the National Guard said.

An ice jam is unpredictable, said Scott Morlock, chief of the hydrologic networks section for the U.S. Geological Survey in Indianapolis.

Sometimes, when high water flows are followed by bitter cold, small rafts of ice can form, he said. These pieces can catch on rocks or narrow points and build up to create a dam.

The 2 1/2 miles of ice jam on Lake Shafer had already caused boats to be jolted from docks and boat houses to be flooded.

Cochran was unsure whether any homes had been damaged by the jam.

[**Back to Indianapolis**](#)



Ice jam on Lake Shafer causes more flooding

Posted: Feb 13, 2008 02:02 PM EST

MONTICELLO, Ind. (AP) - An ice jam on Lake Shafer has caused flood waters to rise, prompting emergency officials to evacuate three families from their homes and distribute sandbags in the community.

Jagged chunks of ice cover the surface of the lake in White County about 20 miles north of Lafayette.

White County Emergency Management Agency director Gordon Cochran says they are monitoring several homes as waters continue to rise. At least two businesses along the lake reported flooding.

Cochran says the lake level has risen about 8 inches from last night to this morning.

Heavy rains and snow melt caused flooding along the Tippecanoe River in Monticello and in other areas of northern Indiana last week and last month.

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White County meeting to discuss floods

STAFF REPORTS

February 13, 2008

MONTICELLO — White County residents affected by the rash of recent floods are invited to a public informational meeting Friday afternoon at the White County Courthouse.

Representatives of FEMA, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, NIPSCO, the Department of Natural Resources and other agencies will be there to provide information and answer questions.

The meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m., Friday in the second floor conference room at the White County Courthouse, 110 N. Main St., Monticello.

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Sandbagging to start on Lake Shafer

STAFF REPORTS

February 13, 2008

MONTICELLO - As the ice jam in Lake Shafer continues to cause flooding in areas near its coast, a sandbagging operation will be starting soon to protect homes and other property.

According to Gordon Cochran, White County's emergency management director, teams of people plan to construct protective walls of sandbags around Lowe's Bridge, off N. West Shafer Dr. near the Twin Lakes Regional Sewer District.

"We will be out here all night," Cochran said.

Areas affected by Tuesday's flooding included homes along Stahl Road, West Shafer Drive, Bedford Bay Court and Apple Knob Drive.

For more on this story, check back with jconline.com and read Thursday's J&C.

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Lake Shafer still jammed up

By ERIC WEDDLE
eweddle@journalandcourier.com

February 14, 2008

MONTICELLO -- The Indiana National Guard arrived here late Wednesday to help save homes from Lake Shafer's encroaching waters caused by an ice jam.

The pileup of frozen chunks across the lake forced water levels to rise unpredictably. Tuesday night the water dropped an inch. But when it swelled by 8 inches Wednesday, residents began to fear more flooding, said Gordon Cochran, White County's Emergency Management director.

"I've been here since 1988 and there's never been water in here," said Ron Motuelle of his lakefront home on Lowes Bridge Road that he feared could become flooded. "I hope the Guard can take a little stress off, but once the water starts, there is no stopping it."

That threat convinced Gov. Mitch Daniels to authorize around 40 members of the Army National Guard from the 1638th Transportation Company out of Gary to help build protective sand walls and take other safety measures that may affect 100 to 200 homes and area roads.

Around 11 p.m. Wednesday, Cochran said the water appeared to have dropped a foot and a half, possibly signaling a shift or complete break in the ice jam.

An ice jam is an unpredictable occurrence, said Scott Morlock, chief of the hydrologic networks section for the U.S. Geological Survey in Indianapolis.

Sometimes, when high water flows are followed by bitter cold, small rafts of ice can form, he said.

These pieces can catch on rocks or narrow points and build up to create a dam.

The two and a half miles of ice jam on Lake Shafer had already caused boats to be jolted from docks and boat houses to be flooded.

Cochran was unsure whether any homes had been damaged by the ice jam.

With 18,000 sandbags on hand to be filled, Cochran was confident the Guard -- along with volunteers and emergency management staff and volunteers from Cass, Miami and Lake

counties, as well as the Indiana Department of Homeland Security and the Monon Fire Department -- could take a shot at protecting homes against the unstable nature of the ice.

"We are better to be safe than sorry," he said.

Excess bags were to be left at the Twin Lakes Regional Sewer District building for homeowners to take as needed.

The flooding area included homes along Stahl Road, West Shafer Drive, Bedford Bay Court and Apple Knob Drive.

While the shards of ice created alien-like sounds when shifting slightly, Motuelle prepared to stay awake late into the night -- not to listen, but watch for water.

He and wife Marilyn were packing up items to evacuate if needed.

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Guard Activated, Sandbagging in White County

Updated: Feb 13, 2008 01:24 PM EST

White County Emergency Management Director Gordon Cochran said Wednesday that Indiana National Guard troops have been activated to help a sandbagging operation on Lake Shafer. An ice jam on the lake created unusual flooding conditions on Tuesday.

Cochran said "we're going to be sandbagging around houses, and we'd like to get the word out that we're not going to stop to talk to people about it."

Cochran said the sandbagging operation would begin around Lowe's Bridge, at the Twin Lakes Regional Sewer District building.

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Disaster Recovery Center to Open in Pulaski County

Updated: Feb 13, 2008 04:46 PM EST

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the U.S. Small Business Administration will open a Mobile Disaster Recovery Center in Pulaski County on Sunday, February 17.

The Center will be open 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time through Wednesday, February 20. The center will be located at the Church of the Heartland at 898 East State Road 14, east of Winamac.

Homeowners, renters and business owners affected by the recent severe storms and flooding are encouraged to register for assistance by calling 1-800-621-3362. Residents are encouraged to register before visiting the Mobile Disaster Recovery Center.

Representative of the Small Business Administration will meet individually with applicants to provide assistance in completing their disaster loan applications.

Pulaski County Emergency Management Deputy Director Les Barton says returning the application is an essential part of the disaster recovery process, even for people who do not want a loan.

[**Back to Lafayette**](#)



Sandbagging in White County

Updated: Feb 14, 2008 05:59 AM EST

It's a race against time, as a sheet of ice that's stretching across Lake Shafer in White County threatens homes and businesses. Volunteers, including the National Guard, are trying to bag enough sand to protect these homes from flooding. Volunteers and members of Emergency Management from several counties are using shovels and machines to fill 18-thousand bags with sand. Each 80 pound bag will be part of a wall built around 100 to 200 homes being threatened by Lake Shafer in White County. White County Emergency Management Director Gordon Cochran said the lake is a a 2 and a half mile sheet of ice.

"But it's holding all the water back so in order to keep peoples homes we've been trying to run water through the dam trying to adjust it that way and it's not working," said Cochran.

Cochran said the ice is backing up the water, and the water is rising. It's threatening homes and businesses. An Indiana National Guard Unit out of Gary and Remington Indiana has been activated to help.

"We're gonna do sand bags, break ice to help stop the water from damming up so it doesn't flood the residents in Monticello," said Indiana National Guard Staff Sergeant Rick Shirley.

Another National Guard Unit out of Elkhart is expected to arrive sometime Wednesday night. The unit will stay for the next three days. The Monon Volunteer Fire Department, and Emergency Management from Miami, Cass and Tippecanoe Counties were on hand to help. Crews will work throughout Wednesday night building sand bags and putting them around homes in the areas of Bedford Bay, Stall Road and East and West Shafer.

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Thursday, February 14, 2008

Group: No Cash For Repairs If Levees Break

Thursday, February 14, 2008

LA PORTE - Due to recent flooding and at least four levee breaks in Northwest Indiana, the Kankakee River Basin Commission has run out of money to repair any future breaks in the system.

KRBC Director Jody Melton made the announcement at Wednesday's La Porte County Drainage Board meeting.

"It is my understanding that the river has not seen these levels since the early '80s," she said, "and there is speculation that the river may reach the highest levels in recorded history."

Melton said as the river rises, she expect there will be a levee or two to break.

"As most of you know, there were four levee breaks - one in La Porte County, one in Jasper County and two in Porter County," she said. "Those were fixed recently and bills have been submitted."

She said the total to fix the four breaks, along with removing a log jam in Porter County and a log jam removal scheduled at Lake County's State Line Bridge, is more than \$95,000.

That leaves the KRBC with an emergency fund of \$35,000, she said.

"We would like the contractors to get paid, but covering the existing bills will deplete our accounts," Melton said. "The KRBC has no money left to close broken levees. We are now at the mercy of the individual counties along the river to cover any oncoming emergencies."

She said if any of the counties are not able to handle that emergency, it would be forwarded to the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, which would contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Guard or other agencies for help.

"It is very important that the state be contacted," Melton said. "Any work done that is not pre-authorized will not be reimbursed."

Anyone with questions should contact Melton at the KRBC office, 6100 Southport Road in Portage, or call (219) 763-0696.

[*Back to Michigan City*](#)

Ice jam on Lake Shafer causes more flooding

MONTICELLO, Ind. (AP) - An ice jam on Lake Shafer is causing flood waters to flow into homes and businesses in Monticello.

White County Emergency Management Agency director Gordon Cochran says NIPSCO has increased and decreased the flow of water through the Norway Dam to try to break up the ice. County officials are distributing sandbags.

It's not clear how many homes have been flooded in the area about 20 miles north of Lafayette. At least two businesses along the lake reported flooding.

Heavy rains and snow melt caused flooding along the Tippecanoe River in Monticello and in other areas of northern Indiana last week and last month.

[Back to Monticello](#)

Herald Journal

Sandbaggers hit Lake Shafer

Fighting off rising waters, National Guard, DOC inmates brought in to help.

Kevin Howell

Reporter

Rising Lake Shafer water levels caused by an ice jam blocking the flow of water downstream have caused concern for homes along the water's edge.

Already worn out by floods and storms this year, White County Emergency Management (EMA) Director Gordon Cochran is taking this new threat as seriously as flood events that occurred in January and earlier this month.

On Wednesday he called out additional assistance in the form of Indiana National Guard troops to help fill and place sandbags around lake homes.

"We're going to be sandbagging around houses, and we'd like to get the word out that we're not going to stop to talk to people about it," Cochran said yesterday afternoon while waiting for troops to arrive.

He said the sandbagging operation would begin around Lowe's Bridge at the Twin Lakes Regional Sewer District building near where the sand was located, and include areas along East and West Shafer Drive, Big Monon Bay, Bedford Bay Court, and "wherever else people need it."

At least four truck loads of sand were ready and waiting and Cochran had delivered about 17,000 bags to be filled. About 40 troops were scheduled to arrive by evening. Indiana Department of Corrections (DOC) inmates approved for outside work crews were also anticipated.

"I have no idea where they are coming from, but the Indiana Department of Homeland Security is sending 40 guards and they're bringing machines to fill the bags," Cochran explained.

"We may not use all the bags, but we'll probably come pretty close."

Cochran said that the water level in the lake rose about 8 inches Tuesday night, although Wednesday afternoon it had dropped again by a few inches.

Some lake homes took in as much as 7 inches of water on Tuesday and NIPSCO officials regulated the fluctuation of the flow out of Norway in an attempt to move the ice jam along. The ice was also having an effect on areas to the north with water levels rising in Buffalo.

That evening, EMA directors and staff had arrived from Miami, Cass, and Tippecanoe counties, as well as rescuers from Monon Fire Department and the Red Cross, as well as other surrounding agencies. More sand, bags, and trucks arrived throughout the evening as the word spread across northern Indiana.

Cochran summarized the plan for the night's detail, which he expected to last about a day; he anticipated the Guard troops would work the whole time, possibly in shifts.

"We're going to try to do doorways, and where we can't, we'll go across the front," said Cochran, referring to where the sandbags would be placed.

As emergency personnel awaited the arrival of National Guardsmen and DOC inmates, Cochran noted that sandbags were to be delivered from Howard County, which serves as a distribution center for state Homeland Security. Lake County rescuers were also on their way with a sandbagging machine.

The Guard troops were delayed by several setbacks, and though they were expected at about 5 p.m. they made it to the TLRSD building at about 9 p.m. Ten soldiers piled out of two trucks, ready to lend a hand to the rescuers already bagging sand. Though tardy, Cochran was happy to have their aid.

The first troops to arrive were from the 1638 Transportation Unit from Gary, Remington, and Elkhart. Staff Sergeant Rick Shirley took a quick moment to explain his troops' eagerness to help. "Because we love the state of Indiana, man!" he exclaimed.

More soldiers as well as DOC inmates were expected to arrive shortly, but had not as of press time.

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Herald Journal

FEMA relief rolls into Cass

Mobile recovery centers continue to move throughout flooded regions.

Kevin Howell

Reporter

Federal Emergency Management Agency Mobile Disaster Recovery Centers are on the move again, traveling to areas hit by January and February floods in northern Indiana.

The centers move to a new location each week to better reach out to flood victims and allow additional access to services beyond stationary recovery centers set up in White, Carroll, Jasper and other counties in the nine-county federal disaster area.

Following stops for several days last week in Elkhart and Fulton counties, now through Feb. 15 a mobile center will be parked at Cass County Emergency Operations Office at 1227 N. Ind. 17, Logansport. A second unit headed further north to the Church of the Heartland in Plymouth.

FEMA opened Disaster Recovery Centers on Feb. 6 with representatives from Indiana Department of Homeland Security, Small Business Administration and the Internal Revenue Service, and will remain open as long as necessary to assist flood victims with grant and loan applications and other needs according to information from FEMA's Lafayette base office.

"Staff can answer questions about registration for disaster assistance and hazard mitigation, help with disaster loan applications and provide information and contacts for other programs," a recent news release stated.

Dollar amounts of money approved for assistance had reached more than \$1.6 million by the end of last week, and \$2.1 million by Monday.

The amount has continued to grow said FEMA public information officer Sam Ventura.

"Total registrations in the nine counties as of the close of business Tuesday was at 995 with 256 in White County and 263 in Carroll County," Ventura said.

"The dollar amount now is \$2.7 million, and because there's always a delay from the registration (process) that number will go up as the days go on."

Of the \$2.7 million, he said about \$285,000 goes to rental units for victims, and about \$2.1 million goes into home repairs with the balance going to other assistance needs.

"The money goes to anything from windows, doors, washers and dryers to whatever people qualify for that makes the most sense - anything to get the house back in shape," explained Ventura.

Some applicants are turned away due to ineligibility, but most often because they are not from one of the nine designated disaster counties.

"But those registrations are held aside in case," Ventura said.

"FEMA is out doing preliminary damage assessments now in other counties, and for example, if Benton County becomes an add-on county, then those registrations would go back into the system."

Ventura said he continues to encourage anyone who might need assistance to register with FEMA by stopping in at

one of the centers, to call FEMA's toll-free number, (800) 621 - 3362, or to register online at www.fema.gov. For speech- or hearing-impaired applicants, the TTY number is (800) 462-7585.

"I don't discourage anyone from calling or going in - we've had some people who just considered themselves lucky they didn't get flooded and go in to see what they can do to improve (their home)," Ventura noted.

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Ice jam on Lake Shafer causes more flooding

Posted: Feb 13, 2008 12:58 PM EST

MONTICELLO, Ind. (AP) -- An ice jam on Lake Shafer has caused flood waters to rise, prompting emergency officials to evacuate three families from their homes and distribute sandbags in the community.

Jagged chunks of ice cover the surface of the lake in White County about 20 miles north of Lafayette.

White County Emergency Management Agency director Gordon Cochran says they are monitoring several homes as waters continue to rise. At least two businesses along the lake reported flooding.

Cochran says the lake level had risen about 8 inches from Tuesday night to Wednesday morning.

Heavy rains and snow melt caused flooding along the Tippecanoe River in Monticello and in other areas of northern Indiana last week and last month.

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Guard fills sandbags to protect Monticello homes from flooding

By Tiffany Griffin

Story Created: Feb 14, 2008 at 8:54 AM EST

Story Updated: Feb 14, 2008 at 8:54 AM EST

MONTICELLO, Ind. (AP) — Indiana National Guard members filled about 9,000 sandbags to use against rising floodwaters caused by an ice jam on Lake Shafer.

The pileup of frozen chunks across the lake forced lake levels to rise by 8 inches Wednesday, causing water to seep into homes, said Gordon Cochran, White County's Emergency Management director. Late in the day, the water appeared to have dropped more than a foot, which might signal a shift or break in the ice jam, Cochran said.

The flooding threat convinced Gov. Mitch Daniels to authorize the Army National Guard to help build protective sand walls and take other safety measures that may affect 100 to 200 homes and roads in the area about 20 miles north of Lafayette.

"I've been here since 1988 and there's never been water in here," said Ron Motuelle of his lakefront home he feared could become flooded. "I hope the Guard can take a little stress off, but once the water starts, there is no stopping it."

Soldiers from 1638th Transportation Company from Remington and Detachment 1 from Gary along with the 1538th Transportation Company from Elkhart assisted, the National Guard said.

An ice jam is unpredictable, said Scott Morlock, chief of the hydrologic networks section for the U.S. Geological Survey in Indianapolis.

Sometimes, when high water flows are followed by bitter cold, small rafts of ice can form, he said. These pieces can catch on rocks or narrow points and build up to create a dam.

The 2½ miles of ice jam on Lake Shafer had already caused boats to be jolted from docks and boat houses to be flooded.

Cochran was unsure whether any homes had been damaged by the jam.

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Plymouth offers to buy homes along Yellow River

by Nora Gathings (hsgathings@wsbt.com)

The city of Plymouth has offered to purchase about a dozen homes near the Yellow River. The homes have flooded several times in the past. (WSBT photo)

By Jim Pinkerton

Story Created: Feb 13, 2008 at 9:45 PM EST

Story Updated: Feb 13, 2008 at 11:09 PM EST

PLYMOUTH — City officials are offering to purchase homes near the Yellow River. They'll use earmarked money to turn the area into a park, but only if the homeowner wants to sell.

The grant money is specifically for buying and tearing down the homes. Officials say it's cheaper than building a levy and won't cause more flooding further downstream because the river would flow and overflow naturally.

Most homeowners have few complaints. Michelle Weldon's house flooded not once but twice.

"It keeps flooding. It damaged the house and foundation," she said.

Water is no longer flowing out of her home, but she's ready to move out. She's even started looking at other homes.

The city is offering to use a \$200,000 grant earmarked by Congress and an additional \$67,000 to buy and tear down 12 homes near the river.

It's an offer Weldon couldn't refuse. She and her neighbors have all signed up.

"It is going to save a lot of heart ache for the homeowner," said mayor Mark Senter.

The state expects each home's appraisal will be 15% to 20% higher than current market value.

"We try to have the appraisers appraise the home prior to damage to a comparable home outside of the flood plain, cause that's where we are hoping to relocate them," said Jan Crider, Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

This isn't the first time the city has offered to purchase homes in a flood plain. About 12 years ago, they bought several homes that used to sit just feet from the river.

"We create green space, which is a benefit to the community. It is aesthetically pleasing. It's one of those things the water goes up, it goes down," said Crider.

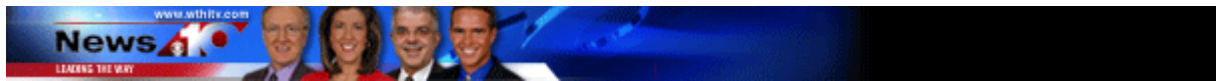
Weldon hopes won't be a concern much longer.

"I am not living next to the river. I'm moving far out into the country or I want to live somewhere that doesn't have a river."

The city has until March 1st to have the homes appraised and fill out the paperwork to apply for the federal money.

If everything goes smoothly, the city hopes to purchase homes by next fall, but it's a long process that's taken places like Fort Wayne 10 years to accomplish.

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Guard fills sandbags to protect Monticello homes from flooding

Associated Press - February 14, 2008 8:54 AM ET

MONTICELLO, Ind. (AP) - The Indiana National Guard is helping to protect homes against floodwaters caused by an ice jam on Lake Shafer.

Soldiers from units in Remington, Gary and Elkhart have filled about 9,000 sandbags.

Governor Daniels authorized the Army National Guard to help build protective sand walls and take other safety measures that may affect 100 to 200 homes and roads in the area about 20 miles north of Lafayette.

The 2 1/2 miles of ice jam jolted boats from docks and flooded boat houses.

White County's Emergency Management director Gordon Cochran says the water appeared to drop by more than a foot late yesterday, indicating that the ice jam may be clearing.

Cochran was unsure whether any homes had been damaged.

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